

Important ESTA Information

From 20th January 2010 it will be mandatory for all British Airways passengers travelling to the United States under the Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) to apply for an Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) 72 hours prior to departure*. This online form will eventually replace the green visa waiver form (I94W) which is currently completed whilst en-route to the US.

The ESTA form has been accessible via ba.com since August 2008 when it was recommended that passengers apply for it on a voluntary basis to familiarise themselves with the system. However, from 20th January, this will be **mandatory** and must be completed by all passengers intending to travel under the Visa Waiver Programme.

Passengers should visit the website: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> and fill in the required information. In most cases a response will be received within seconds determining whether travel to the US has been authorised. If the application is not authorised then a visa may be requested through the US Embassy. In some instances customers will need to wait up to 72 hours for authorisation.

ESTA's are in addition to the requirement for all passengers to submit APIS data.

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions regarding ESTA available on their website: www.cbp.gov

Q&A

What is an ESTA?

An Electronic System for Travel Authorisation is an automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Programme (VWP). Currently citizens of countries eligible for the VWP fill in a green form (I94W) while en route to the US. The ESTA will eventually replace this form. Passengers have been able to apply for an ESTA since August 2008 on a voluntary basis.

*Passengers are advised to apply for an ESTA no later than 72 hours prior to departure.

You can apply for an ESTA even if you do not have a ticket booked to the US.

Do I need to apply for an ESTA?

From 20th January 2010, if you are a citizen of a visa waiver country travelling to the US, you will not be accepted for travel to the US if you do not have a valid ESTA (or Visa/ Green Card).

How do I apply for an ESTA?

Log onto the ESTA website at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> and complete the online application form. *The US Department of Homeland Security recommends that applications be submitted no less than 72 hours prior to travel. In most cases you will receive a response within seconds.

Other websites offer an ESTA service but you may be charged.

What information is required for an ESTA?

The information required for an ESTA is the same as is currently required by the green visa waiver form (I94W).

The traveller must provide biographical data including name, date of birth, and passport information, as well as travel information such as the flight number and destination address in the United States. The traveller will also be required to answer VWP eligibility yes/no questions regarding communicable diseases, arrests and convictions for certain crimes, and past history of visa refusal among others.

You can apply for an ESTA even if you do not have travel booked to the US at the time of application – although you will need to keep a note of the ESTA authorisation number to fill in the flight details when the travel is booked.

We would advise customers who are likely to make trips to the US at short notice to apply for an ESTA prior to any travel being booked.

Will I still need to fill in the green visa waiver form (I94W)?

Yes, although the green visa waiver forms are expected to be phased out during 2010.

Do I need to apply for an ESTA if I have a business visa?

No, you only need apply for an ESTA if you are travelling under the visa waiver programme.

How far in advance can I apply for an ESTA?

VWP travellers are not required to have specific plans to travel to the United States before applying for an ESTA. The US Department of Homeland Security recommends that an ESTA approval be obtained as soon as a VWP traveller begins to plan a trip to the US and *no later than 72 hours before departure.

How long is an ESTA valid?

Approved ESTA applications are valid for two years and allow for multiple trips to the US. However, a new ESTA will have to be obtained if an individual has a new passport within the two-year period or if any answers to the YES/NO questions on the ESTA application form change within this period.

Do I need an ESTA even if I'm just transiting through the US?

Yes, an ESTA will be compulsory for all travel to the US from 20th January, 2010.

Can I apply for an ESTA even if I have no firm plans to visit the US?

Visa Waiver Programme travellers are not required to have specific plans to travel to the US before they apply for an ESTA authorisation.

I am travelling in less than 72 hours. Can I still apply for an ESTA?

The Department of Homeland Security recommends that ESTA approval be obtained as soon as a VWP traveller begins to plan a trip to the US. You do not need to have specific plans to travel to the US in order to apply for an ESTA authorisation.

The vast majority of people applying for an ESTA receive approval within seconds but some applications can take 72 hours to process and a small percentage will be declined.

What happens if I do not have an ESTA when I check in for my flights?

From 20th January 2010, we will not be able to accept VWP passengers for travel if they do not have a valid ESTA.

Passengers will not be issued a boarding pass unless they have an ESTA or the appropriate passport or visa.

Passengers checking in online will be directed to the ESTA website as part of the online check-in process. You will not be able to check-in online without an approved ESTA.

It is the responsibility of the traveller to ensure they have the correct travel documents for their journey.

Passengers may be able to access the online ESTA form at the airport via a computer in the terminal or a hand-held device, or by telephoning a friend or colleague, but it is not guaranteed they would get authorisation for travel in time to make their flight. The application takes up to 15 minutes per passenger to complete. The US Department of Homeland Security recommends that ESTA applications be submitted no less than 72 hours in advance of travel.

Do I still need to fill in my APIS details?

Yes. ESTAs are in addition to the requirement to submit APIS data.

I am not a citizen of a country eligible for the Visa Waiver Programme – how does this affect me?

There is no change to the current visa arrangements for citizens of non-visa waiver countries at this time.

[X] Airline said that I do not need a valid ESTA to travel, why do you require one?

British Airways are fully compliant with the directives of the US Department of Homeland Security. A small number of airlines have been given extra time to ensure they can comply with the mandatory ESTA requirements.

I have received ESTA approval for travel to the US, why are your check-in systems telling me I haven't received approval?

If the details on your ESTA are not exactly the same as the details in the passport that you are using, the two data sets cannot be reconciled and the US authorities will deem that you do not have a valid ESTA. You will need to reapply.

Please note that if a passenger has not successfully completed and received approval for their ESTA, they will not be able to check-in online.